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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE DEMOCRACY OF THE CONSTITUTION, AND OTHER ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS. By HENRY CABOT LODGE. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915.

Approximately one-half of Mr. Lodge's book is taken up with a series of addresses on broadly political subjects—addresses which sum up and define with scholarly precision what are at once the most fundamental and the most familiar objections to such devices as the compulsory initiative and referendum, the recall of judges, and the system of nomination by direct primaries. All these, Mr. Lodge argues, tend to undermine the fundamental principle of representative government; and their tendency is not truly progressive, but regressive, for most of these alleged novelties are in principle very old. Representative government, he points out, and our own system of careful checks and balances, are the results of a slow and painful evolution, and he would have us at least hesitate before returning, in whole or in part, to methods that are time-worn and relatively crude. "Representative government . . . stood for a great advance over the democratic systems of Greece and Rome and of the medieval Italian cities. . . . There can be no question whatever that to abandon representative government and take up in its place legislation by direct vote is to return from a high stage of evolution to a lower and more primitive one. The life of the amoeba may be a better life and a more enviable one than that of the elephant, for example, but there can be no question that the amoeba is a lower stage in the scale of evolution than is the elephant." Repeatedly, and with characteristic force and clearness, Mr. Lodge emphasizes the thought that it is of the very essence of the representative system to preserve the rights of the minority and to guard the people as a whole from the tyranny of majorities whose right to rule is temporary and by no means divine. Having laid down fundamental principles of undoubted soundness, the author reasons upon them with rigor. To some readers, indeed, it may appear that his method of proof is a bit too dogmatic; that his conclusions are perhaps unjustifiably absolute. The possibility of anything like successful compromise between the representative principle and the devices of which he disapproves he seems completely to disallow. That new conditions have arisen, requiring radical changes of

method, he somewhat summarily denies. Even to those who are disposed to agree with the essential line of reasoning employed by Mr. Lodge, the contention that the changed conditions of modern life, because they are almost entirely the results of mechanical invention and of industrial development, can have little effect upon political principles which are based upon unchanging human nature, may not seem wholly conclusive. In short, in these earlier chapters of Mr. Lodge's book, the reader will find no complete and two-sided discussion of the far-reaching problems there dealt with. What he will find is an eloquent exposition of the theory of American government as understood by Washington and by Lincoln—an inspiring delineation of the fundamental concept implied in the phrase "government of the people, for the people, and by the people." Whatever one may think as to the binding force and universal validity of the conclusions arrived at, one can hardly fail to gain from Mr. Lodge's discussions of current political ideas an enhanced sense of the importance of that principle which the author outlines with so much theoretic clearness and historical insight. No one, too, has hit off in sharper or more convincing language than has Mr. Lodge that vital weakness of direct legislation, its tendency to bring about government by "the majority of a minority"—a tendency which an abundance of election statistics proves to be operative.

Although these purely political chapters of Mr. Lodge's book contain many crisp and clarifying sayings, memorable for their brief and energetic summing up of views in which many readers will unreservedly concur, they are not altogether free from the defects that appear in most occasional addresses when reduced to print. They impress the reader in his closet as being somewhat too restricted in viewpoint, a little too diffusely expressed in the interests of plainness, and, taken as a whole, a trifle repetitious. The same cannot be said, however, of the essays and sketches which fill the latter half of Mr. Lodge's volume. These are thoroughly charming, and their charm is of an enduring sort. In the address upon John C. Calhoun Mr. Lodge overcomes the difficulties incident to formal speech-making and produces something really vital, a sketch that bears witness to his unusual gift for drawing character with impressiveness, with sympathy, and with unexaggerated truth. Still more rewarding is the author's intimate sketch of Thomas B. Reed, in which the very flavor of the great man's thought and speech and the refreshing effect of his personality are subtly conveyed. A few of those witticisms of Reed's which Mr. Lodge has quoted are familiar, though they bear repetition well; but many either have lapsed into forgetfulness or are told now for the first time in print. Reed's definition of a statesman as a "successful politician who is dead" has become, of course, a well-worn proverb, but there are few who know the complete story of the humorous interchange of which it formed merely a part. The author, too, has recorded at least one serious remark of Reed's which is more

noteworthy even than his sallies of wit or his slashing retorts—the remark that “half-truths are simple, but the whole truth is the most complicated thing on earth.” Other essays follow, less important in theme, but not less entertaining in manner. Mr. Lodge writes of the origin of certain Americanisms with more spirit and point than writers usually bring to such a theme, quoting from classic English authors sentences almost unbelievably redolent of the so-called American idiom. It is on the whole a pleasant surprise, if something of a shock even to our own preconceived notions, to learn that Carlyle once wrote: “He has brought you a Fox’s *Book of Martyrs*, which I *calculate* will go in the parcel to-day; you will get *right good* reading out of it, I *guess*.” In another essay, the author amusingly traces the subtle process by which an utterly baseless legend, relating a dramatic action said to have been performed by Aaron Burr (or in one version by Alexander Hamilton) in the course of a noted murder trial, came to be accepted as sober historic truth. The concluding piece, entitled “The Diversions of a Convalescent,” is full of that serene and deep delight in good literature which is seldom felt at its highest and is still more rarely communicated in all its freshness of rediscovery.

GERMANY EMBATTLED—AN AMERICAN INTERPRETATION. By OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915.

The opening chapters of Mr. Villard’s book not only state the German point of view with fairness, but convey a strong and convincing impression of the feeling and spirit of the mass of the German people. This impression lasts through the book, and remains dominant in the reader’s mind after the book has been laid aside. One is made to appreciate “the thrill and the uplift born of whole-souled devotion” which “wrenched the populace loose from the purely personal considerations of life and stirred them with all the enthusiasm of readiness to die in a common cause.” “Even the foreign spectators,” writes the author, “caught up in the sudden swirl of vast, loosened reservoirs of national feeling, found it impossible to observe save with awe, and conviction, and deep emotion, this profoundly impressive transformation of a people.” One is made to understand, too, how thoroughly the German people believe that they are in the right, and how entirely natural, how inevitable it is that they should believe this. In fact, among the writings about the war that have appeared in the periodical press or in book form there has been hardly anything that gives such a realization of the moral grandeur of Germany’s great struggle, seen through German eyes, as does this comparatively simple and concise discourse of Mr. Villard’s. The effect upon the reader is both thrilling and disheartening—disheartening because it makes the moral tragedy of the great war seem all the darker.

There are, indeed, two Germanys. Repeatedly in recent years able writers have urged us to distinguish between what is German and